

IX. Monitoring Our Progress

As the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the six-county region, SCAG monitors transportation plans, projects and programs for consistency with regional plans. SCAG also monitors the performance of the transportation system.

Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP)

SCAG is required to prepare the Regional Transportation Improvement Program, to demonstrate its consistency with the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), and to make a finding of conformity with the applicable State Implementation Plan before any federal funds may be expended on transportation projects. Preparation of the RTIP involves analysis of over 10,000 projects and project changes. SCAG prepares quarterly amendments, and works with state and regional agencies to coordinate implementation of the RTP through the RTIP.

The RTIP is a capital listing of all transportation projects proposed over a six-year period for the SCAG region. The projects include highway improvements, transit, rail and bus facilities, high occupancy vehicle lanes, signal synchronization, intersection improvements, freeway ramps, etc. County Transportation Commissions are responsible under State law to propose county projects from among submittals by cities and local agencies. The locally prioritized lists of projects are forwarded to SCAG for review, and SCAG develops the RTIP list of projects based on consistency with the RTP, inter-county connectivity, financial constraint, and its ability to make a conformity determination.

RTIP Data Base Management (Trantrak)

To efficiently manage the RTIP process, SCAG has developed the Trantrak Data Base. Trantrak is a regional data base which serves as a listing for projects in the RTIP and RTP, as well as a mechanism for monitoring project implementation in the approved RTIP. Trantrak provides a data repository for tracking proposed transportation projects. Data regarding state, local, and transit projects include: descriptions, tracking numbers, amendments, funding sources, approval dates, and lead agencies. These data are entered by the Transportation Commissions and SCAG staff and transmitted to Caltrans. Trantrak allows users to produce several informative reports which summarize information based on specified criteria.

Conformity

SCAG is required to make findings of air quality conformity for both the *Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)* and the *Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP)* before these documents are approved by federal agencies. Conformity findings must be made with the adoption of a new

State Transportation Improvement Program or where changes in federal air quality designation or standards require a further demonstration of conformity.

In federally designated non-attainment or maintenance areas, specific monitoring and consistency are required under the Transportation Conformity Rule. At the time of conformity determination, the RTIP must be consistent with the RTP. During project implementation, the sponsor agencies must implement only those projects that are consistent with the conforming RTIP and RTP. The project design concept and scope must be consistent with those reflected in the conforming RTIP.

The project sponsors must inform SCAG (as the region's MPO) of any delay in implementation of any Transportation Control Measure (TCM) project that is included in an approved SIP and any project regionally significant and modeled, regardless of funding sources. Working with the County Transportation Commissions (CTCs) and with the applicable air districts, SCAG must report on the timely implementation of TCMs. Additionally, SCAG monitors changes resulting from a legal, legislative, or election process that may adversely impact the implementation of any TCM or regionally significant project. SCAG informs the sponsor agency of any required actions. In the case of TCM projects, the sponsor agency must officially substitute or replace the affected TCM project.

SCAG's Transportation Conformity Working Group and Modeling Task Force are two official forums used for interagency consultation. There may be additional ad-hoc forums, if needed, to facilitate the required course of action.

Regional Transportation Monitoring

Transportation planning for the region requires continually improved information on the condition and utilization of the transportation system. Special reports are required from SCAG periodically to show the condition of the highway infrastructure and to monitor the region's overall traffic. The Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) is a federally mandated program designed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to assess the performance of the nation's highway system. Under the Clean Air Act, SCAG is also required to report periodically on vehicle miles traveled in each air basin to determine whether traffic growth is consistent with the projections on which the State Implementation Plans (SIPs) are based.

The HPMS is one of the components of an internet-based transportation system currently under development, the Regional Transportation Monitoring System (RTMS). RTMS will be the source for real-time and historical transportation data collected from different local and regional transportation agencies as well as from private data sources. Based on a GIS mapping system, RTMS will be the main monitoring system for collection and distribution of highway and transit data, local and regional traffic information and activities, as well as hosting the subregional transportation monitoring programs.

Highway Performance Monitoring System

HPMS is used as a transportation monitoring and management tool to determine the allocation of Federal Aid Funds, to assist in setting policies, and to forecast future transportation needs as it analyzes the transportation system's length, condition, and performance. Additionally, HPMS is used to provide data to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to assist in monitoring air quality conformity, and its data are used in support of the Biennial Report to Congress on the Status of the Nation's Highways. The HPMS program is implemented annually by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the state of California. SCAG's responsibility as an MPO is to assist Caltrans in collecting data from local jurisdictions. SCAG's responsibility also includes distribution, collection, and administration of all HPMS survey packages in the six- county region.

VMT, Emission, and Congestion Report

Beginning six years after the date of enactment of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, any state containing serious and worse ozone or moderate and/or serious carbon monoxide non-attainment areas is required to demonstrate whether current aggregate vehicle miles traveled (VMT), aggregate vehicle emissions, congestion levels, and other relevant parameters are consistent with those used for the area's demonstration of attainment. Within the SCAG region, the South Coast Air Basin (SCAB), the South Central Coast Air Basin (SCCAB), and the three areas with Southeast Desert are designated as ozone non-attainment areas. Additionally, SCAB is designated as non-attainment area for carbon monoxide. As the region's MPO, SCAG is responsible for forecasting and tracking VMT, emission, and congestion and submittal of these reports to the California Air Resources Board (CARB). VMT reports for Carbon Monoxide non-attainment areas are submitted annually. VMT reports for Ozone non-attainment areas are submitted every 3 years.

Transit System Performance Assessment

Implementation of the Regional Transportation Plan requires changes in the operating practices of transit agencies and integration of the three tiers of transit into a single functioning system. The process of integration is the responsibility of the operators. SCAG will be evaluating the performance selected operators to provide feedback and to transfer applicable lessons to other operators in the region. Issues to be evaluated include the application of advanced transportation technologies applied to the scheduling and routing of transit.

Intergovernmental Review

Under federal law, SCAG is designated as the Regional Clearinghouse for review of all submitted plans, plan changes, projects, and programs for consistency with adopted regional plans and policies. Regionally significant transportation projects reviewed for consistency with regional plans are defined as: construction or expansion of freeways; state highways; principal arterials; routes that provide primary access to major activity centers, such as amusement parks, regional shopping centers, military bases, airports, and ports; goods movement routes, including both truck routes and rail lines; intermodal transfer facilities, such as transit centers, rail stations, airports, and ports; and

fixed transit routes, such as light and heavy rail, and commuter rail. Any project involving transportation improvements is checked to determine whether such improvements are included in the RTP.

Benchmarking

As the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization, SCAG is required to prepare the Regional Transportation Plan using performance based measures that will help decision makers better analyze transportation options and trade-offs. SCAG has developed performance indicators for the region's transportation system. The overall goal of this effort was to develop specific, quantifiable, and easily understandable performance indicators which better inform elected officials and policy boards of the broad array of choices for investing public and private funds. SCAG has been monitoring a number of performance indicators through a benchmarking process in the annual *State of the Region* report. SCAG also conducts a study of commuter attitudes and behavior and publishes an annual *State of the Commute* report.

The State of the Region

The annual *State of the Region* report published by SCAG tracks a series of indicators on major issues facing the region. In addition to data on commuters, the *State of the Region* tracks various transportation indicators: vehicle hours of delay (to measure congestion), vehicle miles traveled (which are directly related to mobile source emissions and are also important in determining the demand for infrastructure improvements), and daily person trips, both home-to-work and total trips (which are used in regional models to measure the amount of travel and forecast trends expected to continue). The annual report also tracks total passenger trips for the major transit operators, airport activity for the major airports – passenger traffic, aircraft operations, and air cargo. The report is intended to help members of the public and private sector analyze the trends and challenges which confront the region.

The State of the Commute

The State of the Commute Survey collects information on commuter's travel behavior and attitudes toward the commute, traffic congestion, alternative travel modes, employer transportation programs, high occupancy vehicle lanes, and demographic characteristics of commuters in the six-county SCAG region. This annual survey provides updated data and information for monitoring and assessing mobility in Southern California, a major category of the RTP regional performance indicators. This study has been a useful tool for transportation planners, operators, and public officials in their efforts to shape the region's transportation policy, infrastructure, and legislation. The report has also been used by businesses in the development rideshare promotional activities.